

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Prize of Peace of Westphalia 2014**

### **Laudatory speech by Tom Buhrow**

### **Director General of Westdeutscher Rundfunk**

Dear Federal Foreign Minister Steinmeier,  
dear Prime Minister Tillich,  
dear Minister Löhrmann  
dear Minister Kutschatj  
dear members of the Board of Trustees,  
dear award winners,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The world seems to have come apart at the seams this year, as you, dear Minister Steinmeier, said last month before the UN General Assembly in New York, warning of a relapse into the Cold War era.

The fact that the world has really, literally come apart at the seams can even be observed from space - 400 kilometers above the earth. Even from this distance, the crew of the International Space Station (ISS) can still see that there is a war going on; they can see missiles flying on the blue planet. A photo of the Gaza conflict taken from space recently went around the world. It was taken and tweeted by German crew member Alexander Gerst. He gave his tweet the simple title "My saddest photo".

This tweet says a lot about the spirit that prevails on the ISS. The astronauts are not simply intoxicated by the beauty of the Earth, they repeatedly point out the vulnerability of our planet. The astronauts up there do not limit themselves to their scientific mission, they also see their work as a political mission.

The very fact that men and women who spent the first years of their lives in hostile blocs now live and work together in space as a matter of course is something wonderful.

In these days of constant talk of a "new Cold War", the ISS reminds us to ask ourselves the very simple questions again from time to time. If Russians, Americans and Germans not only live together peacefully on this outpost of humanity, but can

also gain scientific knowledge together for the benefit of mankind, why do we make it so difficult for each other down here on Earth?

Admittedly, this is a romantic who, even after decades in a business that essentially consists of depicting and explaining wars, has not yet lost hope of a more peaceful world.

Of course, you can also take a much more pragmatic view of the International Space Station. In space, everyone is dependent on everyone else. The astronauts up there would be unwise to complicate their already highly complex work by discussing the Crimea crisis and the reciprocal sanctions imposed by the USA and Russia. This is the view of Howard McCurdy, space expert at the American University in Washington.

In his eyes, the USA and Russia are chained together at the ISS like a "divorced couple" who continue to live in the same house. "They both own the house," he says. "They both keep the house running."

Although there are separate common areas with their own toilets and air conditioning for both sides, they can only manage the complex operation of the station, which is the size of a soccer pitch, together - whether they like each other or not.

Personally, I am firmly convinced that it takes much more than a foundation of mutual dependence to achieve technological and scientific excellence, as the ISS crews have been doing since the first expedition in 2000.

Even the production of a news report for the Tagesschau requires a certain team spirit from the editorial team, reporter, cameraman, sound technician and editor. What kind of spirit does it take to create the ISS, the biggest technology project of all time?

As a US correspondent for ARD, I had the honor and pleasure of reporting on the ISS several times. And each time, after my interviews, I was fascinated by the international spirit that was palpable among everyone involved.

I don't think it is presumptuous of me to say that the ISS not only demonstrates an unconditional will to progress, but also a will to peace.

That is why I am delighted to be able to join you today in awarding the International Space Station the Peace of Westphalia Prize. I know from the founders that the idea came to them when they saw a model of the ISS at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington. "What a great proof that peaceful international cooperation between partners from different cultures is possible," one of the founders said spontaneously.

The ISS astronauts Pavel Vinogradov, Michael Lopez-Alegria and Thomas Reiter, who spent 166 days on board the ISS and is still the European astronaut with the most experience in space, will be able to back this up with countless anecdotes.

Even I, as the director of Westdeutscher Rundfunk, was able to experience indirectly just how hospitable things are on the ISS. Our most important program star was

invited by the German space traveler Alexander Gerst to join him on his journey into space: The mouse.

This is no joke: his orange-colored WDR plush mouse has been accompanying Alexander Gerst for years and has even found a place in the astronaut's luggage. Shortly before its journey into orbit, however, the mouse had to be tested to see if it was suitable for space. And it is.

We called on children to send their questions about the ISS to Alexander Gerst via the Maus website. How does a rocket work? And what do astronauts actually eat in space? His answers are shown online and in the "Sendung mit der Maus" program.

Of course, our viewers mainly see the astronauts. But it is very important for me to take this opportunity to emphasize that the Peace of Westphalia Prize also honours the many thousands of technicians from the USA, Russia and Germany down on Earth. Together, they all make an impressive contribution to ensuring that the ISS can shine like a symbol of peace in the starry sky.

For this, we are now honoring the ISS and its crews with the Peace of Westphalia Award.